



STORAGE FAQ

Q What is the difference between DVD-R DL and DVD+R DL?

A From a user's perspective, there's little difference between the two. Both types of two-layer disc can store up to 8.5GB of data – nearly twice the amount that can be recorded to standard single-layer DVD+/-R discs.

Blank DVD+R DL media are more common than DVD-R DL media at the moment. Most two-layer DVD writers work with both formats, giving you maximum flexibility.

Media for both standards cost around the same price (around £5), so there's no price advantage in choosing one format or the other. There's also no real speed difference between either format. Both discs take longer to write than single-layer discs. Current drive speeds mean that you should be able to record a two-layer disc in around 20 minutes, compared to six minutes for a single-layer disc.

It may seem a little pointless, then, having support for both discs on a drive, but there's one important reason to do so: domestic DVD player compatibility. If you plan on making movie discs, you'll need to record in a format that your DVD player and your friends' DVD players support.

You can find compatibility information at www.videohelp.com by typing the model number of your player into the search tab. If your player supports both formats, buy according to media price.

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REVIEW INTERNAL DVD WRITER

PIONEER DVR-110D

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £32 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.com

DETAILS www.pioneer.co.uk



The DVR-110D is an impressive internal DVD writer. Not only does it write to both DVD+R DL and DVD-R DL two-layer discs, it can do so quickly. The DVR-110D took just 17 minutes and 50 seconds to burn a DVD+R DL, and just over 18 minutes to burn a DVD-R DL.

This two layer performance is especially impressive when compared to the similarly priced NEC ND-3540A DVD writer (see Hotlist, below),

which took a minute longer to write a DVD+R DL disc. Although the NEC is a few seconds faster than the Pioneer when writing single-layer DVDs, the DVR-110D is clearly superior in the two-layer arena.

This is an impressive writer that is let down only by the lack of any bundled software.

Alan Lu

✓ Fast; flexible; inexpensive

✗ No software included

SPECIFICATIONS Internal two-layer DVD+/-RW +/-DL drive, 16X DVD-R, 16X DVD+R, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+RW, 8X DVD-R DL, 8X DVD+R DL, 40X CD-R, 32X CD-RW **Part code** DVR-110DBK

REVIEW HARD DISK ENCLOSURE

RAIDSONIC IcyBox IB-281U

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £18 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.scan.co.uk

DETAILS www.icybox.de



As one would expect for a portable enclosure, the lightweight IcyBox IB-281U is bus powered, so you don't need to carry around a separate power adaptor. However, the retractable USB cable supplied is so short as to be unusable, so you have to use the included USB extension cable.

The IcyBox accommodates any standard notebook-sized 2½" IDE hard disk. Inserting a Fujitsu 60GB 5,400rpm hard disk was easy enough, but since there are no screws inside the enclosure to

hold the disk in place, it had to be pushed in quite firmly until there was an audible click.

The IcyBox USB2 interface performed well. In our large files test, it wrote at 21MB/s and read at 28MB/s. In our small files test, it wrote at 5MB/s and read at 9MB/s.

The IcyBox is a speedy little performer, though you can buy a ready-built external hard disk for the same price as the IB-281U and a hard disk. If you already have a spare notebook drive, this is a good way to put it to use.

Alan Lu

✓ Fast; lightweight; bus powered

✗ Requires USB extension cable; ugly

SPECIFICATIONS USB2, takes 2½" hard disks. **Part code** IB-281U

HOTLIST DVD WRITER

NEC ND-3540A

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £35 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.microdirect.co.uk

DETAILS www.nec.co.uk



Although it doesn't have support for DVD-RAM, NEC's ND-3540A is the fastest of the latest-generation DVD writers. Impressive writing specifications are backed up by excellent performance. It took only 19 minutes to fill a +R double-layer disc and just over 20 minutes to fill a -R dual-layer disc, which for these 8.5GB discs amounts to a nearly 2GB/minute write speed. At this price, you won't find a faster writer.



SPECIFICATIONS 16X DVD+R, 16X DVD-R, 8X DVD+RW, 6X DVD-RW, 8X DVD+R DL, 6X DVD-R DL, 48X CD-R, 32X CD-RW, 16X DVD-ROM, 48X CD-ROM **Part code** ND-3540A

HOTLIST PORTABLE HARD DISK

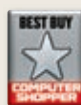
WESTERN DIGITAL Passport 80GB

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £97 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.com

DETAILS www.wdc.com



Western Digital's rubber-bottomed Passport is an excellent portable disk. It's a little bigger than a PDA and weighs just 238g, so it's easy to carry around. Inside is a 2½" hard disk that provides 80GB of storage. It connects via USB Hi-Speed and provides the kind of transfer speeds usual for such a disk: large files transfer at around 22MB/s and small files at 7MB/s. It's ideal as a second notebook hard disk or as portable file storage.



SPECIFICATIONS 80GB capacity, USB Hi-Speed interface, USB powered. **Part code** WDXML800UETE

HOTLIST INTERNAL HARD DISK

SAMSUNG SpinPoint SP2504C

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £79 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.komplett.co.uk

DETAILS www.samsung.com



Samsung's SpinPoint SP2504C was easily the best hard disk in our recent Labs test (*Shopper* September 2005). It combines good value with cutting-edge technology. Its 250GB of storage is accessed through a SATA II interface with Native Command Queuing at a maximum transfer rate of 300MB/s. If you're looking for more internal storage and you have a free SATA connector, this is the best drive to buy.



SPECIFICATIONS 3½" internal hard disk, 250GB capacity, 232GB formatted capacity (NTFS), SATA 300 interface, 7200rpm spindle speed, 8MB cache. **Part code** SP2504C